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December 16, 1999

The Honorable Janet Reno
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Tenth and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530

Dear General Reno:

I have just completed a review of the FBI summaries of the Justice Department's campaign finance interviews of the President and Vice President. As you are aware, for nearly three years I have expressed concerns about the infusion of foreign money into the American political system. Therefore, I am at a loss to understand why you would tolerate an investigation that failed to ask the President a single question about the following subjects: James Riady, John Huang, Charlie Trie, Mark Middleton, and the Presidential Legal Expense Trust. Indeed, the complete absence of any questions about foreign money is extraordinary.

I am also at a loss as to why you would tolerate an investigation that failed to ask the Vice President a single question about the following subjects: the Hsi Lai Temple, Maria Hsia, John Huang, and James Riady.

I have expressed the concern on numerous occasions that you and your Department were not able to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of the President and your own political party. I have also suggested that the inherent conflict in your position creates a perception that justice is not being administered in an impartial fashion. You have appeared before my Committee and you have respectfully disagreed. Two years ago, almost to the day, you appeared before my Committee and told me that, in the campaign finance investigation:

“[W]e are going to follow every lead, wherever it goes[.]”

What am I to think, then, of an investigation that has failed to ask key witnesses any questions about the most important subjects in what has allegedly been one of the largest investigations ever undertaken by the Department of Justice? Indeed, you have accepted plea bargains and concluded prosecutions without the slightest concern that potentially important witnesses have not been approached. Two years ago I said that I thought you would have a hard time being

vigorous in a case that involves your superior and your political party. Your interviews of the President and the Vice President simply prove that my fears were real.

Let me give you a specific example. Yesterday, John Huang testified that before the 1992 election, James Riady and the President took a private limousine ride together. Mr. Huang told us, as he told your own lawyers, that Mr. Riady flew in from Indonesia just for this meeting and a fundraiser, and that he promised that he would raise one million dollars for the President. Did it ever occur to you that there can be very little confidence in the work product of the Justice Department if you neglect to ask the President a single question about Mr. Riady and what the two talked about?

Let me provide another specific example. Years after the initial million dollar promise and the illegal contributions that followed, a landscape architect named Wiriadinata was responsible for \$450,000 in illegal contributions to benefit the President. After he and his wife gave the money, he told the President at one of the infamous White House coffees that "James Riady sent me." I would have thought that you would express some curiosity about the President's reaction. Apparently, you do not think the President should even have been troubled with questions about any of the illegal foreign money that benefited him.

Yesterday, at a hearing, I showed a tape of the President warmly greeting Mr. Riady just two months ago in New Zealand. Mr. Riady has thumbed his nose at our justice system, and your lawyers don't even want to know what he told the President during the private limousine ride, or what the President understood the presence of Mr. Riady's emissary to mean. As you well know from your extensive involvement as the head of the Justice Department campaign finance investigation, these two questions are not the only two that should be of interest to your lawyers. To me, it looks like your failure to ask the President any questions about foreign money issues is preferential treatment for your boss and for his good friend, Mr. Riady.

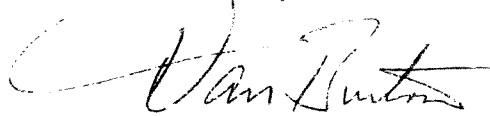
The fact that you and your attorneys have found it inappropriate to talk to the President about any of the foreign money aspects of the campaign finance scandal underscores my original concern that you are not able to investigate the President. It also raises concerns that you have not been vigorous in your efforts to investigate those who have already pled guilty to crimes. If you are not prepared to talk to witnesses, you are failing to gather evidence. If you fail to gather evidence, then you will never be able to get to the bottom of matters or project confidence that you have been thorough and fair.

Over three years have passed since the campaign finance scandal erupted. The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the first head of the Campaign Financing Task Force, and the lead FBI investigator all suggested that you appoint an Independent Counsel to investigate the campaign finance scandal. They did not think that the Justice Department was able to conduct an investigation and maintain the public's confidence. They also perceived that there was a fatal conflict of interest inherent in this investigation. When I asked you two years ago about your decision to refrain from appointing an Independent Counsel, you still had an opportunity to ensure that all leads were followed, and that witnesses were not given preferential treatment. You had the opportunity, but you did not seize it.

The Justice Department investigation of the campaign finance scandal has an unfortunate parallel in the Justice Department investigation of the Waco tragedy. In both cases, you personally decided that an independent investigation was not called for. In the Waco matter, you had one of your assistants supervise the investigation back in 1993. In the campaign finance investigation you fought every attempt to appoint an independent counsel, notwithstanding the advice of the Director of the FBI and your hand picked task force leader. Now, six years after the fact, you have had to appoint Senator Danforth to take the first independent look at Waco. Unfortunately, the damage to the Department regarding your initial failed investigation is severe. With the discovery that you did not conduct even a minimally thorough campaign finance investigation, the Justice Department and respect for the law will once again suffer.

I request that you provide a response, in writing, as to why you failed to ask the President and Vice President a single question about the millions of foreign dollars that were illegally laundered in order to benefit candidates in the 1992 and 1996 Presidential and Congressional elections. I request that you provide this response by December 31, 1999.

Sincerely,



Dan Burton
Chairman

cc: Hon. Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Minority Member

P.S. If your answers are not sufficient
I shall subpoena you before the committee
and you can answer directly to the American
people.